



## THE EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS

*is a unique judicial institution that ensures the protection of fundamental rights throughout Europe. It is accessible to any person within its jurisdiction who wishes to complain of a violation of their rights under the European Convention on Human Rights or its Protocols. People are turning to the Strasbourg Court in ever greater numbers, seeking its protection. To deal with its expanding workload, the Court's staff has increased considerably in recent years. It is against this backdrop that the Court's Assistant Lawyers' Scheme operates.*

THE ASSISTANT LAWYERS' SCHEME AT THE  
EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS

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***THE ASSISTANT LAWYERS' SCHEME*** opens the doors of the Court to legal professionals at the start of their career, giving them the opportunity to gain experience working within a prestigious European institution. To work at the Court means to join a team made up of lawyers from every country in Europe. Within the Registry, assistant lawyers will find an open, supportive professional environment and will benefit from regular working contact with experienced lawyers, senior managers and the judges themselves.

## ***The work***

The principal task of Registry lawyers is to deal with individual applications originating from their own legal system, written in their own language. Each lawyer has his or her own case list and is responsible for steering cases through all stages of the procedure. Assistant lawyers spend most of their time handling some of the many thousands of applications that are rejected annually by the Court for failure to comply with the Convention's admissibility criteria. They also assist in the handling of more complex applications under the guidance of senior colleagues. As assistant lawyers gain

experience, they can expect to be assigned more demanding work and are, in turn, expected to display greater autonomy.



## ***Salary and conditions***

The salary scales for Registry staff are those of the Council of Europe. Salaries are not subject to national income tax. In addition, staff members may qualify for one or more supplements (expatriation allowance, child allowance, etc.). All new staff are covered by the Council's comprehensive medical insurance scheme. Staff are granted six weeks' leave per year.

## *Professional development*

All assistant lawyers benefit from the Registry's in-house training programme from the very start of their employment. The programme is designed to provide all staff with the skills and competencies required to perform well at work. Tailored language courses are available to improve communication and drafting skills in English and French. Practical training in the Court's state-of-the-art information technology is provided on a regular basis. Assistant lawyers can deepen their knowledge of Convention

case-law by attending the lectures and workshops given by Registry staff and by the judges on selected topics. Further opportunities exist through the Council of Europe's staff-training programme. Each assistant lawyer's work experience and training is validated at the end of their time at the Court by a certificate. There is, in addition, the possibility of combining work with further studies. The nearby Robert Schuman University has developed a Master's course in human rights law that has proved attractive to Court staff.



## *Employment for up to four years*

The Assistant Lawyers' Scheme serves the twofold objective of bringing new talent to the Registry and contributing to greater awareness and understanding of the Convention in the legal profession throughout Europe as assistant lawyers advance their careers elsewhere. Employment under the scheme is therefore of limited duration. An initial contract for one year is offered, which may, depending on professional performance, be extended to up

to a maximum of four years.

In the longer term, whatever assistant lawyers choose to do after their time at the Court, be it return to their national legal system or pursue their career in another international institution where their experience at the Court will be viewed favourably, they take with them solid knowledge of Convention law and practice, and above all the satisfaction of having played a direct part in the protection of human rights in Europe.

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## *Living in Strasbourg*

Socially and culturally, life in Strasbourg is lively, varied and stimulating. The city, whose historic centre is a designated UNESCO world heritage site, brings together the French *art de vivre* and a deep-rooted attachment to the ideal of an integrated Europe, amplified by Strasbourg's position at the crossroads of two great cultures. Working at the Court provides a good opportunity to observe at close hand the many and varied activities of the other departments of the Council of Europe, which is the pre-eminent international organisation in the human rights field in Europe today.

The presence of many international and diplomatic staff in Strasbourg gives it added cosmopolitan appeal. Strasbourg also hosts the monthly plenary sessions of the European Parliament.

## *Eligibility*

Only nationals of Council of Europe member States may be considered for recruitment. Applicants must hold a university degree in law, obtained in a Council of Europe member State. Further academic or professional qualifications in law would be an advantage, as would particular expertise and experience in the field of human rights protection. In addition, applicants must have a sufficient command of English or French to draft legal texts and be familiar with standard professional software programmes.

## *How to apply*

Recruitment to the Assistant Lawyers' Scheme is by competitive written examination. Suitably qualified candidates should regularly consult the employment page on the Council of Europe's website for information on current recruitment procedures (<http://www.coe.int>).



This brochure is available on the Court's website: <http://www.echr.coe.int>